



## *The Insider*

[www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski)

### **Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10**

**October 2, 2009**

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov) or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

---

### **Mickey's Blog: A Budget Resolution?**

---

For the second time in 3 years, the state's budget has gone down to the deadline. We have gone past midnight and had a technical government shutdown, but about 2 hours after midnight we had an agreement.

When the auto companies and unions go all night, get an agreement, and avert a strike, we think that is normal. But this is not normal for government. It is a failure. The budget should have been done in early July. I fear that lawmakers, having gone past the deadline in 2007, now think it is the normal way to do budgets. That is an unhealthy development.

There are 16 budgets. We eliminated one and combined two others to save money. So of the 14 budgets, we passed 13, leaving only the K-12 School Aid Budget left to do. The House attempted to pass the K-12 budget, but it ended up failing, 2-108.

*Missed it by that much.*

So the 6-member Conference Committee, of which I am a member, will have to come up with a new compromise and see if we can get 54 more votes for it in the House.

In the meantime, we don't want government to shut down, and the Governor has up to 2 weeks to read the budgets and decide whether to sign them. Since the Constitution doesn't allow the state to spend any money without a signed budget, we passed a Continuation Budget, or one month's worth of funding, to give time for the new budgets to be signed and implemented.

The biggest controversy with the budget, simply put, is the struggle between those who want to reduce spending and those who want to maintain or increase funding. I get hundreds of e-mails, letters, and phone calls and they can be sorted into 2 roughly equal groups.

**Don't cut my favorite program (Schools, Scholarships, Revenue Sharing, Police, or Libraries).  
Don't raise my taxes (Income, Sales, Services, Business, Tobacco, or Beer).**

I would pose one question.

Michigan's receipts from all taxes are down by 12%.

*How should that be reflected in the state's budget?*

Think about it and send me your answer. Don't cut my program or don't raise my taxes is not a precise answer to the question. We already have lots of people who say both things. There was a certain symmetry to a couple of votes in the waning minutes before the shutdown. A Senate bill called for raising the state income tax from 4.35% to 4.8%. It failed 2-36. The aforementioned School Aid budget, with a \$218 per pupil cut in funding, failed 2-108. One might conclude that an overwhelming majority of lawmakers will not vote for cuts and will not vote for revenues.

That explains the budget stalemate.

But that isn't true. The trick in politics is to find just as many cuts that a majority can stomach, with just the right portion of revenue to make ends meet.

It is a difficult balance.

If we found that balance for 13 of 14 budgets, there is no reason we can't find it for the last one.

There will be continuing discussions about restorations of Scholarships, Revenue Sharing, and other items. But they can only be restored if an acceptable funding source can be identified and passed.

I hope we don't engage in accounting tricks, or go into debt to avoid hard choices. We need to pay as we go. And as we spend down our stimulus money, another round of cuts awaits us next year. What we do in these budgets should prepare us for tomorrow when the stimulus money is gone.

---

## **Mickey's Letter Bag: Promise Scholarships**

---

Dear Mickey:

I couldn't agree with you more about the Promise Scholarship. Your dad was a very wise man. I did the same thing with my children. My oldest graduated from Michigan State University with an Engineering Degree, my second son graduated from Michigan State with a Forestry/Wood Products Degree and my youngest son graduated from Western Michigan University with a Manufacturing Engineer's Degree.

And the best part—they earned the majority of the money by working their butts off just like you. And they are all quite proud of their accomplishments. I say in this economy—make the cuts that are necessary. Keep plugging away and good luck.

Pat Newman  
Clinton Township

###

Mr. Switalski,

... I agree that this area should be taking some kind of cut. I am a working mother with a laid-off retired husband and we have three girls. Two have graduated from high school and one is a senior this year. My oldest went to Baker College and has obtained a Bachelor's degree in Business and Accounting. She paid for her college by herself and is currently working as a bookkeeper for an insurance company and holding her own in this time of recession. My middle girl is also attending Baker College and also paying for her courses. She is also working full time for a health care company. She's struggling a little with making the payments on class courses and will probably take her longer to get her degree.

I have always stressed the importance of college to my girls hoping that they would hear my plea when I stressed to them about good grades and going after scholarships. They all had about a 3.0 or higher grade point average but none of them seemed to really have that desire to push themselves to the limit. I consider my family to be middle class, neither myself nor my husband attended college, and we both had decent jobs, he was a carpenter tradesman who worked for 30 years in the trade and I work as an office manager at an automotive-related company and are still happy to say we are in business. I also feel that once they obtain their degree they will be more appreciative of all they have and what they have accomplished.

Susan Mullins  
Clinton Township

###

Senator, I want to state my outrage that the Michigan Promise Scholarship is on the chopping block in the budget crisis.

I understand how hard it is - goodness knows I can barely manage my own budget these days. But students in this state are scheduled and committed to classes during the summer based on anticipated financial aid, and it is not fair at this point in the school year to take it away. Somehow someway thousands of students will have to find ways to cover that money that they have already spent on tuition.

If things like this need to be canceled it needs to be done prior to students scheduling and counting on these funds. The students cannot go back on their obligations at their colleges and neither should the state be able to go back on their promise.

My son is a freshman at Michigan State and he is counting on this funding. Thankfully, his loans are not quite maxed out this semester but had he taken 15 credits rather than 12 credits, it would have been maxed out and next semester will be difficult - he may have to cut his credits from 15 to 12 in the spring in order to cover his costs. Unfortunately in doing this, it puts him behind and he will still have to earn the credit eventually.

I know that there are hard decisions to make - this one should be easy. A promise is a promise and people and government should keep promises. I have lots of ideas about what/where things can be cut - but of course I'm just a taxpayer. I think that layoffs are needed - hard as that is with unemployment so high the private sector has bit the bullet and the public sector needs to follow thru.

Get our state police working-not sitting on the sides of the highway watching for speeders. Raise the speed limit and put the police to work fighting real crime. Trim the secretary of state office - instead of or in addition to penalties for late registration renewal, give a discount for doing it online so that office staff can be trimmed. Cut legislative staffers or consider a part-time legislature. And medical insurance

for life, who else gets a benefit like that, make benefits for our reps and state employees more in line what their constituents get. Just a few thoughts.

Lynn Johnson  
Sterling Heights

###

Dear Mr. Switalski,

I am deeply concerned about the possible removal of the Michigan Promise Scholarship from the state's budget. Right now, I am a senior at Chippewa Valley High School in Clinton Township. The scholarship is of vital importance to many seniors at Chippewa. I talk to my friends every day, and many of them aren't sure if they will be able to afford to go to a good school in Michigan like Michigan State or the University of Michigan. It's a shame that kids who are well-qualified to go to these great schools might not be able to because of financial troubles, especially during these rough economic times. By removing this scholarship, the potential for an undereducated population increases, resulting in a lower standard of living in Michigan. College educated individuals usually make more than only high school educated individuals and the possibility of increased crime because of need.

Education is one of the most important things that a state can do. It ensures a good educated workforce for the future. If more people earned a good education, we probably wouldn't be in the epicenter of these economic troubles. I appreciate the fact that you guys need to balance the state's budget. It's important, however, that something else be cut... Well, I just wanted to let you know my feelings on the Michigan Promise Scholarship.

Carlos Matti  
Clinton Township

---

### Mickey's Notes

---

#### **GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES ASSISTANCE WEBSITE FOR PEOPLE IN NEED**

Governor Jennifer Granholm recently announced a streamlined state website that will help the unemployed and other Michigan residents easily find programs that may assist them. The Helping Hand website, [www.michigan.gov/helpinghand](http://www.michigan.gov/helpinghand), offers information on jobs and training, unemployment benefits, health care, family support, and housing. People who are applying for food assistance will now be able to apply online through Helping Hand and will not have to visit a Department of Human Services Office. The website can also help people determine if they may be eligible for unemployment benefits or certain types of public assistance such as Medicaid benefits.

While Helping Hand covers many programs and services, it doesn't include every available resource in every Michigan community. So the state is partnering with the Michigan Association of United Ways by providing links on Helping Hand to 2-1-1, the United Way system (<http://www.uwsem.org>) that connects people with information and resources. The state is also partnering with the Michigan Community Action Agency Association. For more information on the programs and services that the Macomb County Community Services Agency provides, visit <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/MCCSA/index.htm>.

### **MDOT POSTS GAME DAY TRAFFIC INFORMATION ONLINE**

The Michigan Department of Transportation is making game day traffic information for the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Detroit Lions football games available on their website, which can be accessed at the following link: [www.michigan.gov/gettingtothegame](http://www.michigan.gov/gettingtothegame). Game day travel alerts will be regularly updated throughout the season.

In addition, you can get up-to-date road travel information for state roadways (as defined by the US, M, and I route designation), including a list of statewide lane closures, at [www.michigan.gov/drive](http://www.michigan.gov/drive).

### **DHS CREATES MI BRIDGES WEBSITE FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Michigan Department of Human Services is continuing its focus on ensuring that residents receive the benefits they are eligible for. Through the implementation of the MI Bridges program (an online food assistance application and client self-service portal), families who are eligible or participating in the food assistance program can access their account via the Internet at the following link: <http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges>.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AGENCY TO HOLD FREE SEMINARS FOR EMPLOYERS ABOUT MICHIGAN'S UI SYSTEM**

The Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) will host a series of ten free half-day seminars for employers about the state's unemployment program at various locations across the state in October and November, including one seminar in Clinton Township.

Each session starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 12:30 p.m. The Clinton Township seminar will be held on October 30 at the Macomb Intermediate School District's offices, located at 44001 Garfield Road, Central Training Room 100-B.

The seminars are designed to help explain to employers Michigan's UI tax and benefit programs as well as recent changes at the agency. Topics discussed at the seminar includes how benefits are paid and charged to employer accounts, new online services available for employers, how the UIA calculates unemployment insurance tax rates, and how to appeal a UIA determination decision.

For more information on the seminars, including registration forms and entire event schedule, click on to the following link: ([http://www.michigan.gov/documents/uia/Fall09Registration\\_290579\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/uia/Fall09Registration_290579_7.pdf)).

### **PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ITS 'BE WINTERWISE' WEBSITE**

With winter approaching, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC)'s website offers practical tips to residents on how to reduce their winter heating bills and provides information for how low-income citizens can apply for financial assistance to avoid shut-offs.

The website also contains information on the Home Heating Credit and the Weatherization Assistance Program, and includes the Energy Assistance Directory, developed by the Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, providing a listing of public and private programs and resources by county.

For more information, log on to the following link: ([http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bewinterwise\\_138994\\_7.htm](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bewinterwise_138994_7.htm)).

---

## Coffee Hours

---

\*In response to requests from constituents, I have added coffee hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

<b>October 26</b> <b>1:30-2:30 p.m.</b>  <b>Senator Switalski's District Office</b> (31513 Gratiot, Suite B) Roseville	<b>November 30</b> <b>7-8 p.m.</b>  <b>Clinton-Macomb Public Library-South</b> (35891 South Gratiot) Clinton Township
---	--

---

## Mickey's TV Insider Show

---

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

### **Sterling Heights**

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Utica**

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Clinton Township**

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs  
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

### **Roseville**

Various Times-check local listings  
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

---

## Contact My Office

---

**Website:** <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski>

**Email:** [senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov)

### **Lansing Office**

Senator Mickey Switalski  
Senate District 10  
410 Farnum  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

(866) 303-0110 toll free  
(517) 373-7315  
Fax-(517) 373-3126

### **District Office**

31513 Gratiot, Suite B  
Roseville, MI 48066

Monday through Friday  
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

(586) 294-0925 phone  
Fax- (586) 294-0985